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**"Patterns of Condom Use Among Adolescents:
The Impact of Mother-Adolescent Communication"
American Journal of Public Health, October 1, 1998**

Compelling Evidence that Effective Parent-Child Communication
Can Help Teens Make Life-Saving Decisions

Frank discussions between mothers and their adolescents about condoms can lead teens to adopt behaviors that will prevent them from becoming infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, according to a study published in the October 1, 1998, issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. The findings are from interviews conducted with 372 sexually active adolescents (14- to 17-year-olds) in New York, Alabama, and Puerto Rico. The study found that mother-adolescent discussions about condoms before first sexual intercourse greatly increased the percentage of young people who use condoms, both for their first intercourse and for subsequent acts. Below are highlights from the article:

- Overall, 71% of teens in the study reported having discussed condoms with their mothers. Male adolescents discussed condoms with their mothers at an earlier age than females (12.9 years vs. 13.5 years, respectively).
- Timing of discussions is critical: Condom use increased only among teens whose mothers talked to them about condoms before their first sexual encounter. These teens were 3 times more likely to use condoms than teens who either never discussed condoms with their mothers or who discussed condoms only after initiating sexual activity.
- Condom use at first intercourse dramatically predicted future use. Teens who used condoms at first intercourse were 20 times more likely to use condoms in subsequent acts.
- The average age of sexual initiation in the sample was 13.8 years.

These findings underscore the important role parents can play in HIV prevention among young people. Parents are in a unique position to engage their children in a dialogue about HIV and STD prevention. Discussions must begin early—before adolescents begin engaging in sexual activities—and should continue throughout their child's development.

It is estimated that half of all HIV infections in the U.S. occur among young people under the age of 25, and HIV infection is a leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds in the U.S. In addition, three million cases of other STDs occur each year among teens, and up to one million teens become pregnant in the U.S. each year. CDC believes it is critical to reach young people with comprehensive prevention messages to both delay first intercourse among teens and to increase condom use among young people who are sexually active.

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